

Introduction

If it is the case that culture has become the recognised site for the legitimisation of religious identity in France today, why have a number of thinkers turned to the philosophy of religion in response and in resistance (Agamben, 2004; Debray, 1997, 2001; Lacoste, 1994; Levinas, 2000; Ricoeur, 1998; Žižek, 2000, 2003)? What is it in and against philosophy per se that motivates this turn? Taking Alain Badiou's *Saint Paul: la fondation de l'universalisme* (1997) and Jean-François Lyotard's *La Confession Augustin* (1998), this article demonstrates the potential of philosophy as antiphilosophy to radicalise religious culture, eschewing religion as cultural experience and rethinking it outside the parameters of historicism and sophistry (Badiou, 2009). My aim is to explore in philosophy a lexicon of legitimisation that invites us to reinvent how we think knowledge, subjectivity, fidelity and truth-value through an antiphilosophical act, the central category of which is truth as both a void and thus a new way of thinking. Badiou establishes antiphilosophy as a forgetting of the history of philosophy through the affirmation of the void. I will discuss the implications of this position as he resets subjectivity and the event outside their historical and metaphysical legacies. In the second part of this article, I examine how Lyotard continues the antiphilosophical act through the poetic composition of *La Confession*. Drawing specifically on Stéphane Mallarmé's concept of elimination in *Un coup de dés n'abolira jamais le hasard*, I argue that Lyotard achieves a purity of (non) thought through poetry's capacity to erase the logic of signification described in the relation between word and object.

From non-philosophy to antiphilosophy

Badiou's antiphilosophy, one could argue, has a precedent in the non-philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (2005). Non-philosophy is a useful first sighter in situating Alain Badiou's understanding of Saint Paul along a plane of immanence that views a life of the mind outside the features we associate with the self – consciousness, memory and identity. Badiou, to be clear, is not an empiricist. His ontology is more mathematical, hence his interest in Paul as founded more on the latter's infinity of pure thought. However, what we may be able to take forward from Deleuze's transcendental empiricism in the context of Badiou's Paul are the processes of singularisation than run underneath social wholes and the idea that empiricism is an act of thinking prior to the world of the subject and object.

Badiou views Paul first and foremost as a human being and a free thinker untethered to a subjectivity, identity or social group. Paul's thought is not filtered via self or category but rendered pure ('sensed' by its conviction, determined by its immanence). 'Paul' is thus defined by his embodiment of *pure* thought. In this, he occupies a transcendental field in that his thought is not directly related to a previous experience nor does it belong to a subject: 'Aussi se présente-t-il comme pur courant de conscience a-subjectif, conscience pré-réflexive impersonnelle, durée qualitative de la conscience sans moi' (Deleuze, 1995: 4). For Badiou, the purity of this thought is its *practice* ('pensée-pratique'), a variation on Deleuze's image of thought.

The Deleuzian context is also instructive as non-philosophy. In *Qu'est-que la philosophie?* (2005) Deleuze and Guattari highlight what philosophy is not. It is not reflection and communication, nor is it the four 'illusions' of transcendence, universals,

externals and discursiveness. It is not the inheritance of concepts nor is it causality and its affective chain of relations and associations. They point however to one essential feature of philosophy; its non-philosophical plane of immanence. The plane of immanence is the abstract, absolute milieu where ‘concepts’ are held together before their expression. This plane of immanence is prephilosophical (non-philosophical) in that it is a plane without space for subject or object and where what matters is thought itself and its infinity. The plane of immanence as a non-philosophical image of how thought is resonates with how Badiou thinks infinite thought. Deleuze’s turn away from metaphysics to the plane of immanence and pure thought gestures in the direction of Badiou’s antiphilosophy as a pure thought practice. In thought-practice, Badiou moves away from a systematic approach to philosophy underpinned by dialectics and rational argument to its practice in immanence in which the value of an event is measured only in and of itself and not in external (religious or cultural) capital.

One of the problems with philosophy today, according to Badiou, is that it has lost its relevance to contemporaneity. Thus, in his preface to *L’antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein* (2009), Badiou states that one of the conditions of philosophy is that the truths to which it bears witness must always be ‘*contemporaines*’ (Badiou, 2009: 7). He suggests that we listen to the ‘figure’ of the antiphilosopher for guidance on this. Antiphilosophy¹ is founded in a ‘malaise’ that has afflicted and continues to afflict philosophy today (Badiou, 1992: 57). Symptoms of this malaise can be located in historicism and an unhealthy reliance on hermeneutic, analytic and postmodern traditions (Badiou, 1999) and in sophistry and the effects of discourse. Badiou proposes a violent break (forgetting) of the history of philosophy and a turn away from what he calls the

language games of sophistry (Badiou, 1992: 59-62). In their place, he proclaims truth(s) as the central category of any possible philosophy: ‘La philosophie est la suscitation, sous la catégorie de Vérité, d’un vide [...]. Elle construit un appareil de saisie des vérités, ce qui veut dire: énoncer qu’il y en a, et se laisser saisir par cet “il y a”’ (69). The possibility of truth, albeit a void, enables antiphilosophy to appear as an opening of eternity without God or soul. To aver the existence of a truth (in reaction to sophistry that produces an empty concept of truth) is an antiphilosophical act (Bosteels, 2011: 28) because it is without precedent or guarantee, and only has itself and its effects to attest to its value (29). It is an act of ‘singularité existentielle’ (28) in which the antiphilosopher *speaks*² in his proper name, as this is the only proof of what he is saying. This speech act is the antiphilosopher’s only certainty. As a singular speech act, antiphilosophy goes against philosophy as historical (successive) thought and announces itself as (non-) thought that can ‘touch’ (sense) the real (79). (Non-) thought, as we will see, becomes a way of challenging philosophy’s ‘Je-cratie’ (Badiou, 2009: 80) through the subject, the event and nomination.

Badiou’s *Paul*: subject, event, universal singularity

Badiou’s interest in Paul is as a thinker and a doer, not as a subject. Paul the disciple is replaced by Paul the body. Badiou’s Paul is born of decisions that happen to him over the course of time and which he cannot avoid. This transformation of Paul is singular in its conviction and universal in its singularity. Conviction and singularity are renewed with every new event, each time reconstituting Paul as a thinker/doer. The relevance of Paul to Badiou’s theory of the subject is defined by the way Paul subordinates his existence to

the *aleatory* dimension of the event of the resurrection.³ More broadly, Badiou's 'théorie' of the subject cannot be theorised as an identity or the production of reflection. It is in this key way that Badiou's subject is framed outside history, religion and culture. Let me turn to some related observations on Badiou's concept of the event. An event is declared. It does not owe its truth to history or to miracle. The truth of an event emerges out of the void as an act of conviction. Truth is therefore evental, which is to say that it has no structure or law to account for it. Paul's declaration of truth has value as a 'rupture active salvatrice' only in its naming (Badiou, 2009: 29). In other words, its value is immanent to the declaration itself as an antiphilosophical act and not according to historical, religious or cultural contexts: 'Car être sauvé n'est rien d'autre que le surgissement de l'acte' (85). Badiou replaces the cultural and religious content of the act with Paul's purification by the act and his capacity to '*porter* (pas comprendre, ou savoir, ou penser, mais *porter*)' the conviction of the act itself (86). One of the consequences of this relationship between event and truth is that the object of a subject's subordination (in this case, truth) is not defined as an end-point or a concept.⁴ Truth is a procedure within a void.

'Not in My Name': antiphilosophical speech act

As the subtitle of Badiou's work confirms, Paul is the foundation of universalism. This foundation is built on his subjective subordination. The singularity of his universalism is also non-structural in that it happens outside state, market or public influence. Badiou is as scathing of secularism's republican integrationist dogma as he is of communitarianism itself ('Nous avons affaire à un processus de pétainisation rampante de l'État' (Badiou, 1997: 10). What is of interest, I would argue, in Badiou's representation of Paul as our

contemporary of a universal singularity is the way he (the purity of his ‘thought’) supersedes the temporality of socio-cultural structures. The singularity of Paul’s a-subjectivity – and his universal contemporaneity – are embodied in his erasure and forgetting of cultural and religious allegiances through the antiphilosophical act of his (non-) thought.

The phrase ‘Not in My Name’ (‘Pas en/à mon nom’)⁵ has been widely used in the aftermath of terrorist attacks to denounce violence carried out in the name of religion. On the one hand, ‘Not in My Name’ is a phrase that is born out of extreme violence, reinforced by religious and cultural politics in which religious groups perceive themselves to be alienated. On the other hand, the phrase holds fast to an aspiration to some higher ideal beyond cultural difference. ‘Not in My Name’ carries critical purchase because the particularity of the locution ‘My Name’ is a subjective means of disidentifying with the symbolism of cultural relativism, and creating a different meaning to subjectivity (its a-subjectivity) that gestures to the universal. Ironically and critically, the locution also points to a greater and universal value that the particular can play through disidentification with the universal. The emergence of the phrase ‘Je suis Charlie’, including its variants ‘Je suis Paris’ and ‘Je suis musulman’, play on this declarative universal potential of the particular. Combined, they point to Badiou’s argument on universalism as founded on two conditions. In the first, Badiou’s subject emerges as a universal subject out of his declarative singularity and fidelity to the event. Paul, he claims, orients ‘une pensée à l’universel dans sa singularité surgissante’ (38). Singularity therefore in its very subjective disposition points outwards: ‘C’est le “pour tous” qui fait que je suis compté pour un [...]; le Un n’est pas accessible sans le “pour

tous''' (103).⁶ The second condition is the claim to be able to construct a universalism out of a (Christ-) event that has no historical veracity. However, the positive originality of this condition for Badiou is that Paul takes his consciousness of truth from the purity of the event 'détaché de toute assignation objectiviste aux lois particulières d'un monde ou d'une société' (115). In both conditions, it is the primacy of subjective and singular truth which determines, over and above any societal, political or cultural allegiance, the universalism of truth in an operational void.

'My Name' (and '*Je suis Charlie*') therefore can mean something other than cultural or religious identification. They are antiphilosophical speech acts that bear witness to the universalisation of the particular as a way of wresting power away from religious and cultural relativism.⁷ They are acts that validate the particular outside the cultural. Badiou's particular is reconfigured outside the structures of identity, gender and object determination. The antiphilosophical act is not to be found in an 'I' ('l'Un') but in a connective, transmissive and multiple 'Deux.'⁸ This is the essence of Badiou's universal singularity – the capacity to experience the world beyond the self: 'avec comme point de départ, une chose qui, réduite à elle-même, n'est qu'une rencontre, presque rien, on apprend qu'on peut expérimenter le monde à partir de la différence et non pas seulement de l'identité' (22). Badiou's rediscovered 'joie' in Paul is therefore pluralistic yet rooted in the fact that one does not have to resort to the cultural for the legitimisation of belief. On the contrary, culture's 'sponsors' of law and morality are replaced by antiphilosophy's insistence on the infinity of a transcendent which is not located in any point of origin but in the *persistent* conviction of thought itself: 'Soyez transformés par le renouvellement de votre pensée', exhorts Badiou (118). In his opening chapter 'La

Contemporanéité de Paul', Badiou uses the example of Paul as a universal free thinker to preserve this persistence of free (non-) thought from the debasement of an ideology of culture founded on monetarist abstraction and democracy.⁹ Whilst Slavoj Žižek is more direct in his *naming* of culture as anathema to authentic religious experience,¹⁰ culture for Badiou is associated indirectly with a number of negative phenomena, including the present ('Ne vous conformez pas au présent siècle' (18); the law, which he equates with 'morale'; and with 'oeuvres' by which he means achievements, work, practical life. Resistance to the temporality and transitoriness of cultural production is imperative for Badiou in his persistence of truth as a universal singularity.¹¹ Truth in this sense remains extrinsic to axiom. What is at stake in Paul therefore for Badiou and according to scholars (Watkins, 2011: 58; Hallward, 2002; 2003) is the potential to think and preserve the eternal truth-value of belief as a thought procedure *over and outside* time, and to disconnect with belief as praxis and 'life-world category.'¹²

'Not in My Name' also attests to the value of nomination/naming in the truth procedure of an event. For an event to be a valid antiphilosophical act, someone must recognise and name the event as an event – make it 'proper' to them. For Badiou, to name an event is to underscore the positive, disruptive abnormality of the event as an historical intervention. The events of CharlieHebdo and Paris/Bruxelles (2015/16) may be attributable to the name of 'ISIL' but that in itself does not validate them as 'events.' In his work on the death of communism *D'un désastre obscur* (1998), Badiou clarifies our thinking on the validity of events. He claims that transformation of a situation is not enough to signify that the grace of an event has occurred; nor is it the case that everything changes in an event. He states: 'S'il n'y a pas d'événement, c'est que c'est de l'histoire

des États qu'il s'agit, et nullement de l'histoire de la politique. Cette distinction est capitale' (Badiou, 1998: 20-21). It is the event itself, and the (non-) thought as a reaction to historicism that it cements, wherein lies its eventiveness, not in statist, terrorist or propagandist projections. The Syrian refugees Pope Francis took back to Rome following his visit to the island of Lesbos in April 2016 could be viewed as an event in Badiou's sense of the word; it is an event inspired solely by one person's love/conviction which has a universal resonance. By contrast, the problem with ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) and its terrorism is not only its coupling of statist and religious indoctrination but the prohibitive particularity of its terror. We have argued in the context of Saint Paul and in the significance of the phrase 'Not in My Name' and its variants, that what defines an event is 'une proposition *infinie*, dans la forme radicale d'une singularité, *et d'un supplément*' (11) [my emphasis]. Antiphilosophy reinforces this singularity by affixing to it its universal transmissibility (its supplement). Without this singular > universal trajectory, the singularity of the event as a departure for truth, according to Badiou, is invalid. Terrorist 'acts' fail because 'what is at stake are bloody and nihilistic games of power without purpose and without truth' (Badiou, 2014: 132). Communism, with which Badiou has identified politically, has also fallen short of this proposition because its militant, emergent subjectivity (its 'nous') had been appropriated by a Party machine (7-10). Badiou writes:

Si la subjectivité politique est devenue incapable de soutenir, par elle-même, dans sa pensée et dans son acte, la singularité de son trajet (et donc aussi sa connexion philosophique à l'éternité émancipatrice, aux invariants), alors il n'y a plus d'autre

réfèrent que l'État, et il est vrai que le caractère criminel de tel ou tel État peut devenir un argument sans réplique. (24)

Badiou encourages us to make connections between universal singularity and eventual truths. This is particularly the case in his discourse on difference. Badiou claims that acknowledgment of difference breaks down cultural and identity constructions and is the pathway to universal singularity. By extension the post-requisite to the acknowledgement of difference is its transcendence: 'On ne peut transcender les différences que si la bénévolence à l'égard des coutumes et des opinions se présente comme une indifférence intolérable aux différences' (Badiou, 1997: 106). Respect for difference does not have to equate to political accommodation but can remain at the level of indifference (this is the essence of French universalism). Indifference therefore is not non-knowledge or dispassionate objectivity but can be sourced in the 'savoir' and 'pratique' of difference. However Badiou is no republican; he acknowledges difference but advocates that difference be 'traversé' in order for a universal singularity (not a political universalism) to be constructed: 'Paul [...] non seulement s'interdit de stigmatiser les différences et les coutumes, mais entend s'y plier de telle sorte qu'à travers elles, en elles, passe le processus de leur disposition subjective' (106). I would make two related points. The first is to highlight that Badiou sees difference as an opportunity to level out inequality as a matter of justice: 'Ce que Paul entreprend [...], est de faire passer l'égalitarisme universalisant par la réversibilité d'une règle inégalitaire' (111). Difference is not a reflection of a state of permanence. It can be acted on and through and is subject to change. Secondly, Badiou couches universalism in a modifying

language of traversal. Above for instance, to universalise egalitarianism is described as a process of *passing through* difference with the capacity of being able to affect the particular: 'l'universalité *puisse* faire retour sur les différences particularisantes' (112). Badiou suggests that we can free ourselves from the yoke of particularity through the liberating effects of thinking universally:

L'universel n'est pas la négation de la particularité [...]. Toute particularité est une conformation, un conformisme. Il s'agit de soutenir une non-conformité à ce qui toujours nous conforme. La pensée est dans l'épreuve de la conformité, et seul l'universel la relève, dans un labeur ininterrompu, une traversée inventive, de cette épreuve. (118)

(Non-) thought

According to Bosteels, antiphilosophy is archipolitical and archiaesthetic (Bosteels, 2011: 38). In other words, (non-) thought is more radically political and aesthetic than existing politics and art because the purity of the thought procedure operates in a void divested of socio-cultural signification. This void raises beings into non beings and truths into mythological truths. Paul is not 'Paul' but the '*théoricien antiphilosophique de l'universalité*' (Badiou, 1998: 116). The void is the plane on which the event is played out as a truth procedure (not a reality) and where universal singularity is a thought (not an object). In the same way, Badiou's discussion of the subject is that of a *thought disposition* not an identity. To criticise his theory of universal singularity on the basis of its lack of *real* effects (what he calls disparagingly the *effective* truths of cultural politics)

would be to misread Badiou's antiphilosophy and his wider critique of religious belief. If, as he argues, law is synonymous with culture, then salvation from the law can only be sustained (and for Badiou justified) in the *persistence* of thought itself. Paul's persistence of thought radicalises belief through faith (which saves one from the malediction of the law); through Christ (the end of the law); and through love (the beginning of a new non-literal law).

This radical (non-) thought is 'named' not in the figure of the 'Son' (or disciple) but in the apostle. Badiou aligns philosophy and its cultivation of disciples alongside Christian discourse founded in the generation of Sons. The authority of philosophy as historical knowledge to which the disciple is in awe defines this relationship as one of subservience and inequality. The apostle on the other hand is a witness. His knowledge is not grounded in philosophical logos and its call to 's'imaginer connaître, quand c'est des possibilités subjectives qu'il s'agit' (48). Subjective possibilities are what Paul's conviction to the Christ-event creates; apostles as reborn 'sons' of the event (apostles of antiphilosophy) who supersede the Father, knowledge and philosophical logos: 'L'apôtre [...] connaît le sens univoque de ce qui va venir' (48). The apostle as 'son' enshrines filiative (subjective) equality and *carries* in him the abolition of hierarchy and power. Badiou intensifies this antiphilosophical direction in his radicalisation of faith, Christ, hope and grace. I will end this first part by referring to grace. Having argued that as '*théoricien antiphilosophique de l'universalité*' and '*antiphilosophe de génie*' Paul disarms philosophy through his eventiveness, Badiou underpins his antiphilosophy through grace, defined as 'événementiel' – a *happening* of unfathomable power ('surabondance insensée' (85)) and as a *Law* (not a law). Endowing grace with the power

of a *Law* that is non-legal but whose legitimacy is organically bound to the unpredictable universality of the event, Badiou traverses the cultural, political and legal foundations of law in order to re-legitimise the truth of the event in a lexicon that has the authority to surpass the law in its affirmation of a *Law* (of grace) with universal relevance:

‘L’événement seul, comme contingence illégale, fait advenir une multiplicité en excès sur elle-même, et donc la possibilité d’outrepasser la finitude’ (85). The process at work here is the same process of traversal that Badiou deploys in his discussion on particularity / difference; the universal that traverses the particular is only possible because of the organic and excessive *Law* of truth that emerges from the subject’s declarative fidelity to the event. This is enough for Badiou to sublate difference (including the law of the land). If the law of particularity is derived from the logic of rights and duty, the *Law* of grace is legitimised by its potential happening to everyone *without reason*: ‘La grâce est le contraire de la loi pour autant qu’elle est ce qui vient *sans être dû*’ (80-81). Grace is therefore radicalised in Badiou’s antiphilosophy in a legally non-legal way where the law of finitude is trespassed by the *Law* of grace. In this, Badiou is faithful to the writings of Saint Paul who wrote: ‘Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith’ (Saint Paul, *Galatians* 3:24).

Poetic composition as antiphilosophy

Badiou is not averse to taking a swipe at some of his contemporaries (Badiou, 1989: 7-12). Jean-François Lyotard, a particular target of his opprobrium, is disparaged for his philosophy of ‘ruines’ and immodesty in announcing the end of grand narratives. Badiou

uses the work of Lyotard (and Lacoue-Labarthe) to exemplify modern philosophy's preoccupation with historicism. The argument against historicism serves to distance Badiou's antiphilosophy from his contemporaries. It also, I would suggest, disguises some points of convergence. Badiou and Lyotard are philosophers of rupture – consider Badiou's break with philosophy's 'déconstruction de son passé et l'attente vide de son avenir' (Badiou, 1992: 58) and Lyotard's distrust of metanarrative and its hegemonic discourse (see Deguy, 2001: 97). It is along the line of rupture that I propose to make a case for Lyotard's *La Confession d'Augustin* (1998) as antiphilosophy. In breaking with conventions of presentation and discourse, *La Confession* is an antiphilosophical act in one distinct way highlighted by Badiou in *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein*: antiphilosophy is best conveyed as poetic composition.

Across much of his *oeuvre*, Badiou makes reference to the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, whose poetry, he claims, is an example of antiphilosophy (Badiou, 1989: 49-58; Badiou, 1992: 108-129; Badiou, 2009: 53-55; Badiou, 2014: 33). Mallarmé's poetry plays to Badiou's idea of the purity of thought, the multiplicity of operations in which the subject is annulled and where truth is framed not by knowledge but by 'le néant' (Badiou, 1992: 108-129). At the end of *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein*, Badiou writes: 'Je pense que j'ai résumé mon attitude à l'égard de la philosophie lorsque j'ai dit: la philosophie devrait être écrite comme une composition poétique' (Badiou, 2009: 110). In the same way Badiou views philosophy as a turn towards 'itself' ('Le (re)tour de la philosophie *elle-même*' (Badiou, 1992: 57-78)), poetry is seen as a hermetically-sealed structure ('un assemblage') that stands alone and outside history. For Badiou, poetic language functions for itself as its own linguistic activity and

its own proof of power. It installs its own truth. It is the apogée of anti-communication in that readers get to hear and see what language does not communicate: ‘la poésie fait que la langue dit ce qu’elle ne dit pas, ou montre matériellement le non-dit de son dire. Le lieu de l’acte est alors convoqué au bord des équivoques de la langue, comme ressource non dite de la puissance entière de celle-ci’ (Badiou, 2009: 110). Poetry fits Badiou’s idea of the purity of philosophy as ‘elle-même’ and as transversal.¹³ Lyotard has written extensively on literature and poetry, in particular *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (1988); *Signé Malraux* (1996); *Chambre sourde* (1998a); *Discours, Figure* (2002). A common theme running through his analysis of poetic language is its capacity to undo meaning and return to the transgressive power of the word. As the literature of non-communication, poetry enables the word to lose its arbitrariness for the thing it is supposed to designate. In this procedure, poetry distances itself from the ‘politique de la prose’ and engages with ‘sens’ (not signification) as the site of freedom (Lyotard, 1991: 101). Lyotard describes this engagement as one in which the writer ‘entre en résonance avec la phrase’ (104).

By way of a preface to our analysis of *La Confession*, it may be helpful to situate this view of poetic composition in relation to Lyotard’s concept of the *différend*. In *Le Différend* Lyotard uses the expression ‘un régime de phrases’ (Lyotard, 1983: 10) to highlight the grip of presupposition and meaning on the phrase and phrases. He argues that a phrase is defined as articulate in the way it presents a ‘univers’; a phrase is inarticulate when it does not present a universe, when it does not *speak of* anything but says without articulating that there is something (22). The *différend* is between the articulate and the inarticulate: ‘c’est l’état instable et l’instant du langage où quelque

chose qui doit pouvoir être mis en phrases ne peut pas l'être encore' (29). The *différend* is the contingency at the heart of this linkage and the source of conflict. The significance of the *différend* for literature generally is that narratives (including metanarratives) are places where the *différend* gets neutralised, which is why, as a non-narrative, poetic composition confronts and disrupts the regime of the phrase in relation to causality, continuity and logic (Lyotard, 2002: 62-63). I want to explore Lyotard's *différend* as the place of an antiphilosophical act in the following ways. First, the *différend* resists philosophy's metaphysical fundamentalism as Idea (Boeve, 2011: 274) in its emphasis on the phrase as occurrence (*quod*) rather than its determination (*quid*). Second, poetry is an idiom¹⁴ for the liberation of the *différend* through the abolition of signification as value: 'Il faut beaucoup chercher pour trouver les nouvelles règles de formation et d'enchaînement de phrases capables d'exprimer le différend que trahit le sentiment si l'on ne veut pas que ce différend soit aussitôt étouffé en un litige et que l'alerte donnée par le sentiment ait été inutile' (Lyotard, 1983: 29). Third, the affective language of poetry reinforces resistance to and liberation from the phrase by its direct appeal to the body and senses.

Poem as *différend*

La Confession (melos, poem, psalm) is written as an autobiography with two persons playing critical roles: a confessor (for whom confession is the modern subject 'on safe ground, in the sense of being self-determining or self-sufficient' (Curtis, 2003: 199)¹⁵), and an 'homme intérieur' (or 'ipse') for whom self-autonomy and self-authority have been deferred to the immanent power of the event itself, but who is a counter to the

presumption of the confessor. Designated clearly as an event ('Un écho avant-coureur [...] a devancé l'événement' (Lyotard 1998: 21)), Lyotard introduces Augustine's visitation (event) to him/us outside history, space and time. It is both 'rencontre et ne l'est pas. Comme la transe ne finit pas, elle n'a pas commencé [...]; où la situer, la mettre en relation, dans une biographie? La relater?' (21-22). The arrival is impossible to articulate. The early pages of *La Confession* bear witness to the search for an adequation between event and its articulation. The *différend* to emerge from this search is highlighted in a definition of the self, particularly in our understanding of the 'homme intérieur.' Michel Deguy's analysis is helpful here. Deguy defines Lyotard's idea of the self between inside and outside, in which the inside (the psychological) gives way to the outside (the real, the world) (Deguy, 2001: 95-96). To turn inwards to the 'I' (confessor, cogito) is to process the event by ciphering experience through consciousness and memory: 'And who would ever dream of reopening this inside – *interior intimo meo*? That's known as nihilism' (96). For Deguy, the real transformation of the self takes place outside (that is, the inside in relation to the outside). Lyotard says of the 'homme intérieur':

Non pas le souvenir donc, mais ledit
homme intérieur, qui n'est pas homme et pas
intérieur, femme et homme, un dehors au
dedans, tel est le seul témoin de la présence
de l'Autre, de l'autre de la présence. (Lyotard, 1998: 23)

‘L’homme interieur’, as outside inside, embodies the relationality of the outside to the inside. Deguy sums this up perfectly: ‘[It is] not that the self is inside, but inside the self there is a man’ (Deguy, 2001: 96). For Lyotard, the man is the body:

[...] L’homme intérieur
ne témoigne pas d’un fait, d’un événement
violent qu’il aurait vu, qu’il aurait entendu,
savouré ou touché. Il ne porte pas témoignage,
il est le témoignage. Il est la vision, le
flair, l’écoute, le goût, le contact violés
et métamorphosés [...].
L’homme intérieur n’évoque pas une
absence. Il n’est pas là pour l’autre, il est
l’Autre du là, qui est là, là où la lumière a
lieu sans lieu, où le son résonne sans durée. (Lyotard, 1998: 23-4)

The inner human does not do things. She *is* things. She is the sponge of sensoriality. The experience of the event is felt as a cut to which there is no witness because the cut occurs in ‘un espace-temps à *n*-dimensions’ (27). Invisible, its effects are felt underneath the flesh: ‘Telle serait la chair visitée, compénétrée par ton espace-temps, confondue et confuse de ce coup, mais confite d’infinité, imprégnée et prégnante de ta liqueur surabondante’ (28). ‘Lyotard’s’ standpoint at the crossroads between confessor and ‘homme intérieur’ (between Augustine’s *Confessions* and his own *Confession*) places

him between the articulate and the inarticulate. The ‘I’ is the time of the articulate for the confessor. However it is writing post-event – as reflection. The *différend* of the inarticulate is exposed in the idiom of poetic composition, captured in the following example where the hyphen (‘le travail du trait [...] la silhouette du casseur’ (Lyotard, 2002: 303)) is the graphic place where communication breakdown is threatened and rescued by poetic continuity, and where linguistic deferral repeats the deferral between desire and its object:

Ce n’est pas de l’esprit même, comme il
est écrit, *ipsius animi*, que le temps s’avère la
distentio triplice, mais, dans l’esprit du désir
portant trois fois le deuil de sa chose. L’at-
tend-il, *expectat*, elle se prépose, et se propose
à venir; qu’il cherche à l’appréhender, *atten-*
dit, à force d’attention, elle s’expose et se sup-
pose au présent; se la donne-t-il à retenir,
meminit, elle se dépose et se repose en passé. (Lyotard, 1998: 52)

Here the ‘I’ will never have what it desires. It lives on deferred time, not in the time of its object: ‘il tempore’ (53). The hyphen highlights this deferral. It is also a poetic moment of respiration in which Lyotard breaks the historicism and dogmatism of the phrase/word: ‘où on revient sur soi, où les résonances sont écoutées et libérées [...]. C’est une “stase” (Lyotard, 1991: 104). Lyotard takes linguistic pleasure in undermining the mind’s (‘I’)

arrogance as he maps its efforts to outdo time in capturing the object of its various expectations. Italicisations accentuate this relapse. What to make of this missed coincidence between ‘rencontre’ and ‘acte’? On one level, it is a function of prose writing. Writing, from Lyotard’s perspective, is a space defined by what is/has past; where getting up to speed with the present (coinciding event and the act of writing) is a belated act of retrieval (Muresan, 2004). The hegemony of prose writing – its regimes of ‘démocratie’ and ‘pro-jet’, ‘pro-gramme’ and ‘pro-spective’ (Lyotard, 2014: 35) – has shaped Lyotard’s philosophical and intellectual work. This translates in *La Confession* into the confessor’s ‘dead act’ of writing (up) his confession: ‘la confession s’écrit *posthume* en quête de l’*anthume*’ (Lyotard, 1998: 48). On another level, the legitimacy of the written confession as testament is undermined by the temporal intrigue opened up by its staging in a poetic format. Here, Lyotard’s response (*La Confession*) to Augustine’s *Confessions* is conveyed as an oral confession – a vomitorium¹⁶ of authenticity in which the immediacy of the act itself obviates any negotiation with language (‘la terreur du mot’). As we will see in the final part of this article, Lyotard elevates oral confession to an act of truth in which forgiveness arrives on the spot (as in absolution).

Mallarmé’s elimination

Lyotard’s study of Mallarmé’s *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* helps deepen our analysis. Lyotard’s preoccupation with Mallarmé’s poetry is textual and formal. In particular, he responds to Mallarmé’s deconstruction of the phrase: ‘arriver de la *phrase* à la lettre par le mot; en nous servant du signe ou de l’écriture, qui relie le mot à son sens’ (Lyotard, 2002: 64). Central to Lyotard’s argument is the way Mallarmé’s poem deprives

articulated language of its prosaic function as communication (the phrase) by cutting ties between word and object (what Lyotard quoting Mallarmé calls ‘élimination’) (Lyotard, 2002: 63). This elimination takes the form of a typographical and textual re-organisation, opening on to the space of the sensory: ‘Par là la poésie radicale exhibe qu’il y a du sensible en puissance dans le sens. Où est-il logé? Pas directement dans la “matière” des mots [...], mais dans leur arrangement’ (67-68). Quoting Mallarmé extensively, Lyotard expands on the process of elimination by arguing that the loss of the object is nothing more than the loss of the *sight* of the object. Its representation still remains: ‘cette importance du visible présent jusque dans l’espace vacant du retrait’(63). This transposition from sight to visibility in withdrawal passes through the register of affect: it is the “sensation” that preserves ‘la reminiscence de l’objet aboli’ (63). Literature, through its signs, offers a visible trace of this process. In this final part of *La Confession* Lyotard states that authentic confession is only possible ‘si les *opera*, les choses comme elles sont données, sont aussi des *signa*’ (98). In this statement, he attests to the ipseity of the thing in itself (confession in its orality) but he also opens up a space for the mobility of the thing as sign. It is an important shift in the context of the *différend* because it allows us to approach our acknowledgement of the event outside the regulatory regime of the phrase as causal linkage and via what the phrase/word cannot express or what is not immediately presentable to us but which is still visible/possible.

‘Lyotard’, the commentator inside *La Confession*, proposes a challenge for mind and soul to find out who can get close to God. He dismisses the suggestion proposed by the *animus* (mind) that God can be conceptualised or imagined in the archive of memory (Watkins 2011: 58). Turning to the *anima* (soul), he speculates whether the *anima* could

embody the form of an angel to burst through the firmament and see God in the light of God. As the *animus* gives up on the challenge, the *anima* gives in. In her trance-like state, the *anima* recounts interconnecting encounters with God (via poesis, anamnesis, awe). Each encounter is indicative of a form of desire-object elimination in which the angel finds fulfilment in the loss of God *as object*. In each, the event of God's visitation is channelled *indirectly* as surprise. By the same token, these forms of elimination operate directly through inhabitation. In Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, grace (*gratia inhabitationis*) is the presence of divine will in all humanity, and this presence is intensified as sanctifying grace in the case of the believer. *Gratia inhabitationis* bears witness to God's presence *in* mankind, as opposed to variations of the concept of grace that construct it through acts of charity and virtue as seen in the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas (I-II.100.2/3.4). Grace situates Augustine's experience of the relationship between God and mankind as an *internal* divine presence – as immanence.

If we take a closer look at the encounters themselves, inhabitation works on several levels. The first is sensorial. The distant formalities of 'Toi' and 'Moi' of the *blazon* in the first encounter are deconstructed by the sharing of senses between God and 'homme intérieur':

[...]. Je t'ai dégusté dans ma
bouche et je reste affamé, assoiffé. Tu m'as
touché et j'ai brûlé d'ardeur pour ta paix. (Lyotard, 1998: 76).

This reciprocity is sustained sexually. The presence of God in man is signified in the lover maximising his lover's 'cinq estuaires' over 'cinq mois' in a 'quintuple férocité.' Secondly, confounding consciousness and philosophical logic, it is in memory relapse (anamnesis – antiphilosophy) where inhabitation is valorised in the form of God's intimate enshrinement inside mankind. Here, inhabitation, a synaesthesia of intoxication, is all-consuming with God immersing the human in his presence. In the final encounter, the notion of an external God is erased with God having made his shrine in mankind:

Le voici un instant logé au plus intime.

Les limites sont renversées, le dehors/le

dedans, l'avant/l'après, ces niaiserie de l'esprit. (77)

In this insemination of the absolute *from inside* mankind, Lyotard points to poetic composition as the place where, in no longer speaking through signification or the causal constraints of 'langue', language reveals in it the power of elimination through the sensory. The signified of God is experienced sensorially, 'expressed' in a space that is the object's (God's) (Lyotard, 2002: 64). Accordingly, our understanding of the event as an encounter with God is transformed into our encounter with God in ourselves.

Lyotard describes elimination as 'l'approfondissement de l'espace de référence comme distance infranchissable qui sépare le verbe et la chose et garantit au premier sa portée d'idéalité' (63). The tension of this distance is played out in the latter stages between the two figures of the angel and the child (infancy). The angel occupies

the totality of the firmament. Sharing the firmament with God is enough for the angel to know God. It is a knowledge that comes from immanence with God and an equality of presence with him, rather than from philosophy or reading. The angels have no need of reading because his Word does not require mediation between word and object:

Les créatures angéliques n'ont nul besoin,
comme nous, de lever le regard vers les
énigmes d'un firmament, ni d'épeler des écri-
tures, pour connaître ton Verbe. Car ils
voient ta face, à jamais et, sans que le temps
déroule ses syllabes, ils y lisent les volontés
de ton vouloir éternel. Merveille, lecture
admirable, sans médiation [...]:
ils ne cessent de lire et ce qu'ils lisent jamais ne passe. (Lyotard, 1998: 64)

The angel encapsulates the elimination of signification. Lyotard's use of the word ('Verbe') for God has echoes of Mallarmé's 'verbe' for the divine. Mallarmé replaced the word 'God' with 'verbe' as divine to highlight his rejection of an anthropocentric view of the world in which God is seen to preside over the creation of a hierarchical human race, where knowledge of this world is separate and exterior to the world itself. By privileging the word ('verbe') as the source of shared knowledge and parity, Mallarmé established an anthropomorphism founded on the power of language to eliminate the separation of man and God (Stanguennec, 1992: 42-43). Lyotard gestures to this distinction in the section

called 'Différend' in *La Confession*, specifically the difference between 'ipse' and 'I.' The 'ipse' is 'pure verbe en acte' with God – a parity instigated by anthropomorphism. The 'I' calls this relation 'dieu' ('appelle ça dieu parce que c'est la coutume, parce que la théologie est aussi oeuvre de consuetude' (Lyotard, 1998: 56-57). The 'ipse' of the *différend* is the purity of the break from the protocols of thinking, explaining and naming what is incommensurable:

[...]. Et ici le différend est tel, entre ta vertigineuse visitation
et la pensée, qu'il serait aussi fat que celle-ci,
aussi faux et déceptif, d'expliquer que, non
pas le nom de dieu, mais ça même *id ipsum*,
par-dessus je, la joie folle, procède du sexuel.
Ce qui est incommensurable, qui peut en
prendre la mesure commune? Un savoir qui
s'en targue, en enjambant l'abîme, l'oublie,
et récidive. La coupure est primale. (57)

Lyotard describes the sky as a book or 'bréviaire dédié par l'auteur à l'édification des mortels' (61). On the one hand the sky confirms the authorship of God as Supreme Being. On another, it gestures to the space of elimination (prefaced by the angels). The central image of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* is a ship in rough seas against the backdrop of a sky at night. The disposition of the letters on the page conveys both movement of the

ship and the Big Bear constellation that appears at the end of the poem; form and content in perfect symmetry. Writing conveys this symmetry via black (word) on white (page). However, we know that the scene of the poem takes place at night, which invites Lyotard to ask this question:

Le ciel nocturne, négatif du texte, donc? Pas tout à fait et pas seulement: écrire blanc sur noir, c'est écrire avec l'encre du hasard dans l'élément de l'absolu. L'absolu est la trace immuable en tant que signe, présence du verbe (le mot est de Mallarmé, dans les écrits sur le langage), le blanc est le sens absent. La constellation, c'est "l'infini fixé", le blanc de l'indéfini capté dans le signe. Seulement ce signe n'est pas un livre, c'est une forme: ni ombre, ni blanc, les deux. Et c'est en ce sens que c'est un lieu. (Lyotard, 2002: 65)

Lyotard's response challenges powers of representation and meaning – how can a night sky and the appearance of a white constellation be represented by writing black on white? It cannot but we can imagine it. It is the power to visualise this scene as an image of the writing process that is of interest. We can imagine that writing is a practice fraught with uncertainty (writing in the dark, so to speak), with whiteness indicative of an absence (in waiting) of signification. The constellation that appears, and can only appear in its totality, at the end of *Un coup de dés* bears witness not to the absence of meaning or writing in the dark but both. For Mallarmé and Lyotard, poetry is the place ('lieu') for this mutual abolition; the place where 'rien n'a eu lieu que le lieu' (65).

Unlike the angels who ‘lisent l’immuable de façon immuable’ (Lyotard, 1998: 65), human thought is viewed through the lens of infancy.¹⁷ Infancy is an important concept for Lyotard (Lyotard 1985; 1991). It has been described as an ‘integral part of his legacy’ (Fynsk, 2001: 47). The ambiguously entitled *Lectures d’enfance* (1991) does not refer to what Lyotard read as a child. The work is better understood as Lyotard writing from an infancy and to an infancy that is prior to thought; the infancy of thought, of an encounter, of an event, and the value of this infancy as initiation into something else (Lyotard, 1988). This space prior to thought is also described as a body – not the body of the child but the body of an unconscious space that remains after it has been ‘claimed’ by language and the ego. Infancy is therefore limitation and (fore) sight. Infancy obscures (fore) sight because once thought comes it is processed ‘à la manière d’enchâînements discursifs linéaires’ (Lyotard, 1998: 63). Infancy is supposed to lead to the ‘vrai livre [...], le livre de vérité face à face et tout d’un coup’ (63). But it stalls in a purgatory, ‘chassés du paradis de ton intimité’ (63). However Lyotard offers consolation for infancy in the final pages aptly entitled ‘Crayon.’ Infancy returns in the exchange between the woman from Ascoli and the priest in the confessional box. The woman’s belief in the power of absolution is so strong that even before the sacrament is imparted she ‘knows’ her sins have been absolved: ‘Si Dieu pardonne, elle l’*entendra* avant que pénitence accomplie. Dieu ne lambinera pas, elle en est sûre. Il reconnaît la vérité où elle décape d’un trait les dépôts de silence’ (119) [my emphasis]. Running afterwards to the piazza on the hill, her forgiveness is captured in the metonymy of the landscape as child: ‘Une enfant lisse est ce paysage qui commence et n’a jamais péché. Rien n’est plus saint que sa légèreté’ (120). Lyotard ascribes a purity to the infancy of (non-) thought, as he does also to

absolution as an integral part of the sacrament of penance. The priest returns to his private quarters after confession to write his own confession:

Le saint homme s'applique ligne après ligne à tout mentionner de ce qui a déplu, il charge son cas, fustige sa mémoire à ne pas oublier le moindre détail [...]. Son enfance elle-même, il requiert contre son silence et ses caprices. Il faut qu'après le laborieux mémoire, tout ce qu'il croit qui peut lui valoir l'indignation du seigneur soit consigné. (120)

The *différend* between the woman's confession and the priest's is revealing. Her absolution is not only pure and immediate it is sensed (heard-understood) in advance. Its infancy is pre-scriptive. Its prescience is reinforced by the post-scriptive rituals of the priest's '*pensum*', for whom infancy is a nostalgia rather than an anticipation. Oral confession – the 'alliance' of one voice with another – breaks with the litigious implications of the written confession in which 'tu dois et donc tu auras ma protection' (121).

Conclusion

Badiou's *Paul* and Lyotard's *Augustin* are complementary and contrasting interventions on the theme of antiphilosophy. They emerge out of the crisis of the subject that steered the theological turn of phenomenology in the 1980s. They pursue this turn via a number of commonalities (particularly the ahistorical nature of the subject and the event) that underscore a wider and deeper antiphilosophy. In the highly charged socio-political and

cultural context in which religion is played out today in France, antiphilosophy offers a different pathway for philosophy founded on a purity of thought liberated from the shackles of historicism, sophistry and metaphysics.¹⁸ As a category of truth founded in a void, Badiou's antiphilosophical act strips back religious belief to its pre-subjective and pre-evental states where conviction to a truth does not depend on scriptural or cultural leverage for legitimacy, but finds its authority in the purity and persistence of thought in relation to the infinite. For Badiou, the way to minister this thought procedure is through universal singularity – not the oblation of self to the other (à la Levinas or Ricoeur¹⁹) but a move outwards from the narcissism of self to an engagement with difference in the form of 'l'être de l'autre' (Badiou, 2009: 24: 28). For Lyotard, Mallarmé's pursuit of elimination ('le néant') in *Un Coup de dés* is the backdrop to Lyotard's last and unfinished (poetic) work before his death. The pure presence of antiphilosophy in *La Confession* is sensed in the idiom of poetic composition as freedom from the language of communication. The poem as *différend* bears witness to this elimination. Poetry resets the default position inside the senses and the infancy of thought.²⁰

Notes

¹ In 1992, Badiou devoted a series of seminars to four 'antiphilosophers': Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Lacan and Saint Paul. See also his work *Lacan et les philosophes* (1991a).

² Badiou states that philosophy is not a theory but an act: 'La philosophie (c'est-à-dire l'antiphilosophie, ou l'antimétaphysique, c'est la même chose) est une activité de parole *non théorique*' (Badiou 2009, 109).

³ The aleatory nature of universal singularity is central to the foundations of Paul's universalism and to Badiou's theory of love (Badiou, 2009a: 13-17).

⁴ By de-objectifying the space of the subject, Badiou replaces the object as a place for truth with truth *as a procedure* through which the subject must pass: 'A subject is that which a truth passes through' (Badiou, 1991: 25). The theory of a de-objectified subject for whom truth is a procedure underpins a revised understanding and reception of Christianity. Saint Paul does not owe his saintliness and universalism to an adherence to the historical biography of Christ or to a truth that could be identified in a commandment.

Paul's universalism is founded in a subjective thought that declares itself in the *event* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In other words, Saint Paul epitomises the subject who emerges universal out of his subjective singularity and not out of objective determination.

⁵ It is worth noting the limited use of the French language equivalent at the time of the events.

⁶ Christopher Watkins explores the metaphysical implications of Badiou's distinction between the multiple/infinite versus the one in *Difficult Atheism* (2011: 23-32).

⁷ The same process can be said to be at work in the idea of 'trending' in which the declarative nature of the particular accrues a wider universal significance founded on its potential to galvanise public opinion. This is evident in the use of '*Je suis* Charlie.' Even the rather whimsical variations of the 'Je suis' phenomenon ('Je suis chien', 'Je suis diesel') play on the universal (trans-species, trans-faith) possibilities that traverse the particular. The phrase 'Au nom de quoi?' ('In Whose Name?') – that accompanied the image of a red rose inserted in a bullet hole on a shattered restaurant window – reinforces this thesis. The graphic image is predicated on the presumption that that which is universal, no matter how incomprehensible, has a 'name' to ascribe to it, even though in this case the identity of the name is in question. All examples testify to the declarative potential of the particular to transcend itself and denote something else.

⁸ In his treatise on love, Badiou states: 'L'amour, ça n'est pas simplement la rencontre et les relations fermées entre deux individus, c'est une construction, c'est une vie de l'Un, mais du point de vue du Deux. Et c'est ce que j'appelle la "scène du Deux"' (Badiou, 2009a: 33). Compare Badiou's subjectivity in declaration with Debray's formulation on transmission in which '*l'objet de la transmission ne préexiste pas à l'opération de sa transmission*' (Debray, 1997: 37).

⁹ The words Debray and Žižek use to contrast 'free-thinking' from cultural encounter is 'persist/persistence.' For Debray, it forms part of a wider lexical and theoretical distinction between 'transmission' and 'communication' in which the 'transmission' of Christianity is a process of 'prolongation' and mediation *over/through* time, as opposed to 'communication' which 'propagates' directly *through* space and to superficial effect (Debray, 1997: 3-20). In a subtle critique of the culture of communication, in which Žižek invokes the 'spectral' as an agent of transmission, he writes: 'Perhaps the best way of encapsulating the gist of an epoch is to focus not on the explicit features that define its social and ideological edifices but on the disavowed ghosts that haunt it, dwelling in a mysterious region of non-existent entities which none the less *persist*, continue to exert their efficacy' (Žižek, 2000: 3).

¹⁰ For Slavoj Žižek, modernity, capital and secularisation have reduced religion to a 'secondary epiphenomenon' and a 'lifestyle' (Žižek, 2003: 3-7). 'Culture' ('the new central life-world category') and 'the name for all those things we practice without really believing in them', is the last place, claims Žižek, to look for an authentic religious (Christian) legacy.

¹¹ The following image from Badiou's *Éloge de l'amour* (2009a) illustrates how Badiou visualises universal singularity in its transition from the non-identarian to the universal: 'Si, appuyé sur l'épaule de celle que j'aime, je vois, disons, la paix du soir sur un lieu montagnard [...]; et que je sais, non pas son visage, mais dans le monde même tel qu'il est, et que celle que j'aime voit le même monde, et que cette identité fait partie du même monde, et que l'amour est justement, en ce moment même, le paradoxe d'une différence identique, alors l'amour existe, et promet d'exister encore. C'est qu'elle et moi, sommes incorporés à cet unique Sujet, le Sujet d'amour, qui traite le déploiement du monde à travers le prisme de notre différence, en sorte que ce monde advient, qu'il naît, au lieu de n'être que ce qui remplit mon regard personnel' (28-29).

¹² 'Personnellement, je me suis toujours intéressé aux questions de durée et de processus, et non pas seulement aux questions de commencement [...]. L'énigme de la pensée de l'amour, c'est la question de cette durée qu'il accomplit' (Badiou, 2009a: 33-34); see also Badiou on love in *Saint Paul* (Badiou, 1997: 91-97).

¹³ Badiou writes: 'Les conditions de la philosophie sont transversales' (Badiou, 1989: 13). By this Badiou means that philosophy is not defined by historical period but cuts across all times frames and disciplines.

¹⁴ Lyotard says that it is the task of literature and philosophy to find the idiom of the *différend* (Lyotard, 1983: 30)

¹⁵ For an analysis of the relation between confession, the subject and modernity, see Curtis's article (Curtis, 2003: 189-207).

¹⁶ This is Lyotard's language.

¹⁷ The theme of infancy is important in Lyotard's definition of the encounter (event) and its value as initiation and as a 'body' before the 'I' of 'adulthood' is assumed (see *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (1988) and *Lectures d'enfance* (1991)).

¹⁸ Throughout this article, I have stressed the significance of Badiou's Paul in terms of disengaged engagement – that is, engagement being at the level of thought and not culture. Žižek's Paul operates along the same lines; for Badiou's 'thought' read Žižek's 'inner experience of the divine.'

¹⁹ See notes 3 and 8. Badiou also reinforces in a more direct way his critique of oblation love in *Saint Paul*: 'Paul n'est nullement un théoricien de l'amour oblatif, par quoi on s'oublierait soi-même dans la dilection de l'Autre. Ce faux amour, qui prétend que le sujet s'anéantit dans un rapport direct avec la transcendance de l'Autre, n'est que prétention narcissique' (Badiou, 1997: 94).

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